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FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9520
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUMIAGH/COMJTF-B SIMS SOTO CANO HO IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE
RHMFIUU/HQ USSOUTHCOM J5 MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SAN JOSE 000197

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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OSD FOR A/S STEVE JOHNSON, DEPT FOR WHA/CEN AND WHA/PPC

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [CS](#)
SUBJECT: COSTA RICA: REQUEST FOR DOD HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFT
ASSISTANCE

REF: A. SAN JOSE 0003
[1](#)B. SAN JOSE 0071

[1](#)1. (U) Post requests DoD assistance to provide two helicopters to lift 160,000 pounds of construction materials which will be used to construct five suspension bridges to support indigenous communities in the Talamanca region of Costa Rica. This is an important humanitarian mission, supported by, and to be conducted with, the GOCR's National Emergency Commission (FEMA equivalent), as well as with the involvement of UNICEF. The lack of safe bridges in this remote, mountainous and impoverished region too often results in the death of local residents attempting to cross gorges and rivers on primitive, homemade bamboo bridges. In the last year, 12 people have died and over 25 have been injured at three of the five bridge sites, including children who died while trying to get to school. Bridges are essential in this region as most schools, hospitals, and other components of the government's social support networks are located several hours walking distance from the communities.

[1](#)2. (SBU) This request comes at a time when the GOCR has specifically asked for U.S. military assistance for humanitarian projects, including last December's MEDRETE (Ref A) and bridge survey project (Ref B). This is a highly significant development for a country (and administration) traditionally reluctant to be involved with most things military. The Arias government is realizing that targeted USG humanitarian and security assistance can help rebuild national infrastructure, improve domestic security and law enforcement, and address shortcomings in the broken health care system, all key objectives of the Arias Administration. This humanitarian airlift mission is also consistent with two of our four Mission Strategic Plan priorities (investing in people and promoting prosperity). If approved, this mission will pave the way for continued humanitarian missions in Costa Rica, to the benefit of the people and the credit of the U.S. military units involved.

[1](#)3. (U) JTF-B assets have already completed two site surveys in preparation of this operation. OSD approval is needed since the bridging material to be lifted is non-DoD and on a non-reimbursable basis.

COMMENT

[1](#)4. (SBU) Applications of soft military power such as MEDRETES

and humanitarian missions, including providing lift for these suspension bridge materials, directly contributes to furthering USG policy in the region. Being a country with no military, Costa Rica's new willingness to receive assistance from U.S. military assets demonstrates just how far our bilateral relations have progressed over the last few years. Post assesses that approval of this request will demonstrate continued USG commitment to the people of Costa Rica at the time when they need it. Finally, the GOCR will be an equal or greater partner in this endeavor and is committed to seeing it through to completion. Post thanks OSD and SOUTHCOM for considering this request quickly, and we look forward to a favorable response.

BRENNAN